

**EAST CAROLINA COLLEGE**

**Greenville, North Carolina**

**A COMPARISON OF TWO METHODS  
OF TEACHING GRAMMAR**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Education**

**By Sandra Kay Booth**

**Department of Education**

**August, 1964**

A COMPARISON OF TWO METHODS  
OF TEACHING GRAMMAR

Approved By:

*J. W. Batten*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisory Professor

*Houghton R. Jones*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of the Department

*Education*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Department

*John O. Reynolds*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Graduate Studies

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OF TEACHING GRAMMAR**

**An Abstract of a Thesis**

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In an attempt to determine the best method of teaching grammar to college preparatory seniors in Junius H. Rose High School in Greenville, North Carolina, a comparative study was made by teaching two paired groups, one of which was instructed by a formal grammar approach and the other by a functional approach. The control group, using formal grammar study, made a comprehensive study of grammar through the phases of definition, recognition, and application of grammatical principles as developmental steps in communicating effectively, including sentence analysis, uses and structures of verbals and clauses, and different aspects of each part of speech. Special points of punctuation and usage were also studied. The experimental group, using a functional grammar approach, worked in a composition laboratory designed to make the student apply scientific construction and evaluation to his writing. The only grammatical principles studies were those which were found in examples of student writing. Specific errors were studied in order that they could be eradicated from the student's writing. Vocabulary study was made by requiring students to use a definite number of new words in each project, while the students in the formal grammar group were given word lists.

In order to measure the knowledge of grammar of the students in the paired groups, the English section of the Essential High School

Content Battery, Form A, was administered at the beginning of the project, and Form B was given after the first semester examinations. A comparison of the test results indicated that the control group using the formal approach made higher gains than did the functional grammar group in the areas of vocabulary and business terms, but the functional grammar group had significantly higher gains in the areas of language usage, capitalization and punctuation, and spelling. It was concluded that higher gains are made in vocabulary improvement when word lists are the chief means of study and when application of the use of such words is frequent. A functional approach should be highly effective in teaching the grammatical principles which apply to composition, as the students retain more knowledge of such principles when they have seen errors and examples in their own writing.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT PAGE

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. RELATED LITERATURE.....	8
III. PRESENTATION OF DATA.....	24
IV. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	36
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	39

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Scores and Gains in Vocabulary ;.....	25
II. Scores and Gains in Business Terms.....	27
III. Scores and Gains in Use of References.....	28
IV. Scores and Gains in Language Usage.....	30
V. Scores and Gains in Capitalization and Punctuation.....	31
VI. Scores and Gains in Spelling.....	33
VII. Summary of Median and Mean Gains by Both Groups.....	34



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Most beginning teachers of English realize that the problems confronting them in their work are both new and old. The problem of selecting what to teach and the best methods of presentation have perplexed other teachers but are yet new to beginning teachers due to the constant influx of ideas and literature. No longer can the English teacher use only a textbook as a guide for teaching, but he must keep informed of current trends and ideas through periodicals and new textbooks. One problem concerning the teaching of English in high school is the conflict over how grammar should be taught. The grammarians themselves are at present clashing over traditional, structural, and transformational approaches, and all these fields of thought are opposed by those who would insist that all grammar be entirely excluded from the curriculum and replaced by composition.

In an age of scientific inquiry, scientific proof and backing for a great many ideas are needed. Prospective teachers are urged to experiment and to do research before arriving at any permanent conclusions about particular teaching methods. Even after arriving at such conclusions, teachers must hold them with tentative reservations, realizing that the same techniques are not effective in all situations or with

all groups.

Purpose of the Study. This study attempted to compare two methods of teaching grammar in order to determine which was more effective for college preparatory students at Junius H. Rose High School in Greenville, North Carolina. A formal approach was used with one group, while a functional approach was used with another. Tests were administered to determine the knowledge of grammar retained by students in each group. Since a beginning teacher in English was conducting the study, it was hoped that it could be determined early which method was more effective with students going to college, realizing that their preparation in English is vital to their college success.

The instructional aim of the study was the same for both groups taught and tested: to provide the students with an adequate background in English grammar which would ultimately enable them to communicate effectively in their college work. The methods used to achieve the aim varied, in that the control group was taught grammar by the formal approach and the experimental group was instructed by a functional approach.

Significance of the Study. Due to the controversy over methods and approaches to grammar, this experiment was directed to achieve factual evidence of the effectiveness of formal or functional grammar.

Studies had been conducted to measure the value of any grammar in communication effectiveness, but none had been found which measured the effectiveness of two methods of teaching grammar in the learning of grammar. Thus the experiment would have merit if the findings were able to lead to conclusions about knowledge of grammar achieved by either method.

Definition of Terms. To clarify the intention of the study a definition of terms used for the methods is given.

Formal grammar means the instruction of grammar by introducing grammatical structures, such as parts of the sentence, then recognizing them in examples, and subsequent application and use. The lessons were predetermined for this group, and an attempt was made to follow the sequence closely.

Functional grammar implies the study of grammar only as it is used by the students in composition of sentences, paragraphs, and essays. The students studied only those grammatical structures developed from the writing of the class, and the errors made by the students in composition were analyzed in an attempt to eradicate them. As the students in the classes were in grade twelve, their writing had a high maturity level, thus providing a great variety of grammatical structures for consideration.

## Procedures

Control Group (formal grammar). The students in this class were introduced to the study of grammar as a picture of the structure of the English language. They were invited to use originality and previous knowledge in a review and comprehensive study of grammar being made through the phases of definition, recognition, and application of grammatical principles as developmental steps in communicating effectively. The unit began with an analysis of the sentence: types, structural patterns and common errors in construction. A written group of sentences demonstrating the application of each lesson was assigned and evaluated carefully. The uses and structures of verbals were studied next, with exercises demonstrating their uses being carried out by the students. The use and structure of clauses was studied in detail, followed by a study of different aspects of each part of speech, such as verb tenses, moods, and voices, cases of nouns and pronouns, and comparisons of adjectives and adverbs. The study of usage was integrated with the other grammar being studied, but special points of difficulty were studied also. Punctuation was thoroughly reviewed, with special attention being given to application of rules. Although the succeeding units were not devoted entirely to grammar, important principles were discussed and reviewed. The same approach, (introduction, recognition, and application) was used in the teaching of the research unit,

which, although it is not strictly grammar, the approach and its effectiveness were measured on the test given. Vocabulary study consisted of weekly lists of words selected from the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test Handbook. This study of words was also an application procedure, with the students using words in oral and written sentences.

Experimental Group (functional grammar). The first unit for the experimental group was a composition laboratory, which was designed to make the student apply scientific construction and evaluation to his writing. A developmental program was undertaken in this unit, wherein the student worked first on sentences, then on paragraph development, then on perfecting style and diction in formal exposition, description, narration, and argumentation. Means of achieving sentence and paragraph variety were discussed with individual students in reading and discussing their sentences and themes. To achieve vocabulary interest and improvement, the students were instructed to use a definite number of new words in their writing, with the use of Roget's Thesaurus and dictionaries. At the end of each laboratory project, words and structures used by the students were discussed, using the opaque projector to show the papers to the class as a whole. Brief quizzes were given on the materials discussed after the laboratory sessions.

Procedures in Measuring Growth and Achievement. During the second meeting of both classes, September 3, 1963, the English section of the Essential High School Content Battery, Form A, was administered. This test attempts to measure all aspects of English skills and knowledge, consisting of reading comprehension, vocabulary, business terms, literature acquaintance, use of reference materials, capitalization and punctuation, usage, and spelling. For the purposes of this study, the results of the reading comprehension and literature acquaintance have been omitted. A retest, Form B of the Essential High School Content Battery, was given after the semester examinations in February in order that growth and retention might be measured.

#### Limitations of the Study.

Testing procedures. It must be recognized that no test can completely and accurately measure the progress and achievement of every student being tested. The tests were given at the beginning of a new school year when students had not engaged in serious mental activity for three months. This factor might attribute to low scores on the pre-test. The test was also administered by a new teacher, whose supervision may have caused some tension.

Teaching situation: Since the teacher was aware of the influence of the learning process on the results of the study, the teaching situation may have been somewhat artificial, or the teacher may unconsciously

have stimulated the students in one group in order to achieve the desired results from the experiment. Caution was taken to achieve objectivity in teaching both formal and functional grammar.

Limited sampling. All the students used in the experiment attended Junius H. Rose High School in Greenville, North Carolina. Thus the results could be considered valid for this region only, but as the students are all seniors and plan to attend college, similarities to other regions could be discerned. The small number of pairs have been validated due to the method of pairing and selection.

## CHAPTER II

### RELATED LITERATURE

Historical Survey of Grammar Teaching in America. The history of grammar teaching involves a variety of methods and approaches, most of which were trends at one time. Most of the early schools established in the United States were Latin grammar schools, and English grammar was not introduced until the advent of public education. Those teachers who had learned and taught Latin adapted their methods and approaches to the teaching of English grammar. Until 1823, most English grammar was an imitation of Latin grammar, consisting primarily of memorization and little application. Parsing and the correcting of false syntax were used during the period from 1820 to 1850, but the procedure was still highly Latinized.<sup>1</sup>

The publishing of the grammar text, The Analysis of Sentences, by Samuel S. Greene in 1847, introduced the study of grammar as a science.<sup>2</sup> This text used the method of analyzing given sentences and constructing new ones based on general statements and theories about the language.

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<sup>1</sup>George H. Shankle, "Aims and Methods of Teaching English Grammar in American Schools," Education, LI (September, 1930), 41-43.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 42.



In 1873, the teaching of English grammar incidental to exercises in written and spoken English was begun.<sup>3</sup> This practice initiated a period of transition from the study of English grammar to the study of composition, thus narrowing the size and scope of grammar teaching. The period from 1900 to 1920 stressed the teaching of grammar as valuable only insofar as it aided composition. During this period, grammar received little or no systematic study.

From 1920 to 1930, it was the general feeling of school teachers that English grammar was indispensable to those people engaged in educational work, for it seemed to furnish the skeleton which supported all effective communication. To indicate the tendency toward functional grammar, Rivlin found that 60.3 per cent of the grammar in English textbooks in 1930 was functional (having practical application), while only 25 per cent of the grammar in texts in 1900 was functional.<sup>4</sup>

Since 1930, a continual controversy over method and approach of teaching grammar has prevailed. There are still many grammarians and teachers who believe that grammar is valuable as an academic discipline or that grammar should be taught only as it is practicable. The question of whether to teach traditional, structural, or generative grammar is also echoed. Thus, divided opinions exist about how and

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Harry N. Rivlin, Functional Grammar. Contribution to Education, No. 435 (1930), p. 53.

what to teach in grammar.

Other Studies Related to Functional Grammar. Although no other studies have been conducted to measure the amount of grammar learned by functional and formal teaching methods, some studies dealing with functional grammar have been done.

A six-year study undertaken by the Purdue University Department of English attempted to prove the validity of the common assumption of English teachers that the knowledge which students have of functional grammar and of punctuation has a direct bearing upon the correctness of their writing. The procedure for the study was the comparison of grades made on tests in grammar and grades made on weekly themes by students in freshman composition. The grammar testing was limited to those terms which are useful in the explanation of errors in writing or which are met in the conventional phrasing of punctuation principles, and the themes were carefully graded for correctness of composition, content, and style. The results of the study generally indicated an average correlation between the knowledge of grammar and achievement in writing, and the conclusions of the study were as follows:

1. Students with a knowledge of usable grammatical terms will belong to a group which will, at least 90 per cent of the time, write better themes than students with a smaller amount of knowledge of such grammar.

2. Students with a knowledge of the principles of punctuation will belong to a group, which will, at least 90 per cent of the time, write better themes than students with a smaller amount of knowledge of such punctuation principles.<sup>5</sup>

W. J. Klopp, in a comparison of methods of teaching grammar to eighth grade students, found a marked improvement in sentence structure when the work in functional grammar was individualized by the use of self-administered drills and tests.<sup>6</sup>

George Ransom experimented with a high school group using functional grammar and found that the group which accepted the principles of diagnosis and remedial drill improved much more in ability to write correctly than did a control group which used a practice pad.<sup>7</sup>

In an experiment using practice versus grammar in the learning of correct usage, P. M. Symonds reported that a combination of many procedures, including "memorization of rules, practice in analysis of grammatical construction, choice of correct construction, choice of correct forms, and mere repetition of correct and incorrect forms in

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<sup>5</sup>George W. Wykoff, "The Relation of a Knowledge of Grammar and Punctuation to Writing," Educational Administration and Supervision, XXXI (October, 1945), 387.

<sup>6</sup>W. J. Klopp, "Grammar by Rule or Practice," English Journal, XXII (November, 1933), 751.

<sup>7</sup>George Ransom, "Remedial Methods in English Composition," English Journal, XX (February, 1931), 155-157.

succession", yielded results in improved usage better than any single method alone.<sup>8</sup>

An account of an experiment with college freshmen completed at Superior State Teachers College had the following thesis:

The teaching which aims to take up specific difficulties as they arise and to present correct usage without a logical background of grammatical principles is wasteful, because one general principle thoroughly understood will solve more problems than can be taken up specifically by the teacher and will prevent many difficulties from arising a second time.<sup>9</sup>

It appears that the experiment was not questioning the value of teaching functional grammar but the method in which it was presented. The freshman English classes were divided into two sections; the Cx section was given three times as much grammar as practice in writing, and the Cy section was given three times as much practice in writing as instruction in grammar. The Cx section had a higher correlation of grammar knowledge as related to composition skills. The conclusions of the study were:

These results may possibly indicate that practice in writing is superior to instruction in grammar, accompanied by drill in workbooks, for teaching the decencies of manuscript form. However, the fact that under either

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<sup>8</sup>P. M. Symonds, "Practice versus Grammar in the Learning of Correct English Usage," A Journal of Educational Psychology, XXII (February, 1931), 88.

<sup>9</sup>Bernice Cooper, "Can We Teach Grammar for Composition?" English Journal, XXII (December, 1933), 826-828.

method of teaching there was gratifying progress suggests that motivation of the individual students to improve in composition can be accomplished by either method.<sup>10</sup>

The College Entrance Examination Board reported after a five-year study that those students who entered college on the basis of ability to write achieved much better than those who entered on the ability to label grammatical forms. The Board accordingly adjusted some of its testing procedures to measure judgment in composition rather than identifying grammar terminology.<sup>11</sup>

In an attempt to relate the factors of English usage to composition, R. W. Edmiston and C. N. Gingerich tested students from grades 4-12 with the Hudelson Typical Composition Scale and the English usage test from the Ohio State Every Pupil Test (April, 1938). In no instance was the correlation of usage and composition high, and a decrease in correlation occurred in the upper grades. The conclusion of this study was that the English usage tests are poor measures to indicate the need of remedial composition instruction, indicating that other factors as well as usage influence the ability to write well.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>11</sup>Dora V. Smith, "Reestablishing Guidelines for the English Curriculum," English Journal, XLVII (September, 1958), 321.

<sup>12</sup>R. W. Edmiston and C. N. Gingerich, "The Relation of Factors of English Usage to Composition," Journal of Educational Research, XXXVI (December, 1942), 269-271.

H. L. Leonard did a study to determine whether the use of practice exercises in the nature of proofreading, error correction, and dictation improved the pupil's ability to write compositions free from punctuation and capitalization errors. The results indicated that practice exercises are economical and effective teaching devices if designed to transfer to written composition.<sup>13</sup>

Although each of the studies is devoted to a specific phase of grammar, they seem to indicate that functional grammar is usually an effective method of teaching. Most of the studies have stressed practical application for written composition.

Theories on the Teaching of Grammar. In determining the purpose for teaching grammar, as well as the method and type, the student, the community, and the need for communication must be kept in mind. Many teachers, when selecting the type and method of grammar to teach, often forget that the student is to be considered and thus select the grammar which is easier or more interesting for the teacher. According to Ferdinand Gruen, who did a dissertation on the subject, the aim or purpose of teaching grammar may be twofold:

Grammar may be devoted to either the perception of meaning, the giving of knowledge (theory) or to the

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<sup>13</sup>H. L. Leonard, Use of Practice Exercises in Teaching Capitalization and Punctuation, Contribution to Education, No. 372, (1930), p. 21.

development of skill, the formation of habits (practice).<sup>14</sup>

In its entirety, formal grammar has been a grammar of legislation, consisting of an elaborate code of rules. It is prescriptive, technical, and classificatory, emphasizing the logical completeness of subject matter on the assumption that knowledge gained is valuable in itself as mental discipline.

In 1895, the National Education Association Committee of Fifteen on Elementary Education issued the following statement about the aims of grammar:

... grammar demonstrates its title to first place (in the curriculum) by its use as a discipline in subtle analysis, in logical division and classification, in the art of questioning, and in the mental accomplishment of making exact definitions.<sup>15</sup>

Even as late as 1950, certain grammarians still affirmed that grammar was valuable mainly for its mental discipline as evidenced in an article by Joseph Keller in the English Journal. Keller maintained that grammar should be taught as an analytical and theoretical study in an age of science. He also felt that students enjoyed such study of language because rules gave them security and that they were able to see grammar

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<sup>14</sup> Ferdinand Gruen, English Grammar in American High Schools Since 1900. (1934), p. 159.

<sup>15</sup> Harry Rivlin, "The Present Status of Research in Functional Grammar," English Journal, XXVII (September, 1938), 590.

as a system.<sup>16</sup>

Functional grammar has enjoyed a long period of approval even though those who advocate formal grammar have attacked it bitterly.

Gruen defines it as to aim and scope:

Functional grammar is the grammar of description and consists of a small body of facts or usages. It is practical and usable. It stresses knowledge as a means to an end in its application to daily use. It is defined in terms of social utility, in accordance with the modern conception of education that the curriculum matter should be determined by children's actual needs as the best means of providing for their social efficiency in later life.<sup>17</sup>

In accordance with the same idea of teaching for individual needs, Dorothy Slaybaugh, in setting up a functional ninth grade English program, states that any course in English must be functional, as the teacher must relate the material of the course to the life of the student in order to gain his interest. By emphasizing the necessity of efficient communication, she says, the children will accept the teaching of certain functional principles of grammar and usage.<sup>18</sup>

James Binney in "A Short Report Concerning Grammar," states that the grammar which needs to be taught involved the formation of

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Keller, "On Teaching the Grammar of English," English Journal, XLV (April, 1956), 206-207.

<sup>17</sup> Gruen, sp. cit., p. 59.

<sup>18</sup> Dorothy B. Slaybaugh, "Functional English for Ninth Graders," California Journal of Secondary Education, XXI (January, 1946), 24-26.



sentences, proper and skillful use of clauses and phrases, and a basic understanding of sentence elements. He continues about the type and amount of grammar:

1. The type of grammar which is valuable is functional rather than prescriptive--that is, its purpose is to assist students to speak and write.
2. The amount of grammar needed to help in writing and speaking is not considerable and is easily taught. But it should be taught.<sup>19</sup>

The view that grammar has failed to be effective because of insufficient connection with writing is expressed by Bertrand Evans, who believes that a knowledge of grammar can help a student to write. A correlation must be made between grammar and writing, and the two should not be widely separated in time. Evans advocates that the teacher tell the class at the beginning of the school year to question her when they do not see a connection between knowledge of a grammatical element being studied and problems in writing. If the teacher cannot explain and demonstrate the connection, the element should not be studied. Thus the connection would be drawn by the teacher rather than the textbook, probably resulting in a clearer correlation for the students.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>James Binney, "A Short Report Concerning Grammar," Education, LXXVI (April, 1956), 474.

<sup>20</sup>Bertrand Evans, "Grammar and Writing," Education Forum, XXIII (January, 1959), 215-218.

In evaluating the high school curriculum in English, Charles V. Hartung recommends that training in the use of practical language skills should be taught according to the needs of the individual pupils.<sup>21</sup>

Audrey Hoover, in defining functional grammar as a means rather than an end, stipulates that the amount of grammar to be taught will be limited by use. She continues that functional grammar in the early grades does not refuse to give children terminology, or names of the grammar that is used, but gives no more than is needed in the comprehension of a specific point of grammar. Traditional teaching of frequent usage errors has not been as successful as inductive teaching as errors arise, demonstrating the need for an answer.<sup>22</sup>

In a recent article, "The All-Important Fundamentals", Grayce Foley Salerno recommends a developed program of grammar which stresses only those principles which help to eliminate errors in writing:

The functional approach with a concentration upon student errors and problems must be accepted as the true measuring rod by which learning progress may be recognized and increased.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Charles V. Hartung, "The High School Program in English: A Critique," Education Forum, XXVI (March, 1962), 299-300.

<sup>22</sup> Audrey Hoover, "Functional Grammar," Clearing House, XII (February, 1938), 365-368.

<sup>23</sup> Grayce Foley Salerno, "The All-Important Fundamentals," Clearing House, XXXV (January, 1961), 295-297.

Benjamin Brickman, in "Functional Grammar in Junior High," recognizes that functional grammar is being used too often with formal method of presentation. He suggests functional presentation, also, showing the function of various grammatical principles in a teacher-pupil composition discussion, thus assuring greater correlation of grammar with writing.<sup>24</sup>

That the time formerly devoted to instruction in formal grammar now be given to writing practice is recommended by Louella B. Cook. The writing practice will probably cause some questions about grammar which should be answered as much as possible when they arise. She continues:

... the "place of grammar" is largely inside the teacher's head, to be drawn out and used at need rather than taught outright to students of any grade level this side of college (or possibly Grade XII as an elective).<sup>25</sup>

J. Harold Smith reemphasizes the value of functional grammar as he suggests as positive approach to grammar on a basis where the learner can understand it as having a common sense application to his

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<sup>24</sup> Benjamin Brickman, "Functional Grammar in Junior High," Clearing House, XXXIV (September, 1959), 13-15.

<sup>25</sup> Louella B. Cook, "Teaching Grammar and Usage in Relation to Speech and Writing," English Journal, XXXV (April, 1946), 189-190.

own achievement as the user of language.<sup>26</sup>

The New York State Education Department advocated the following policy for grammar in 1935 and still includes it in its syllabus for English:

It seems fair to assume that only such grammatical principles should be taught in the public schools as actually function in the improvement of oral and written expression. The application of this principle results in the elimination of many items of purely scientific or formal grammar, and consequently in an increase of time that may be devoted to the mastery of the skills of self-expression.<sup>27</sup>

Changes in the Regents examinations were made in accordance with this principle.

As reflected in an article by Richard Corbin, one of the main demands of the public on teachers of English is not for the more extensive teaching of grammar, as might once have been true, but for more and better writing. Grammar is usually mentioned in relation to composition at present, emphasizing its functional nature. Corbin suggests that the functionalists have not removed formal grammar from the classroom but have tried to adapt it to conditions in the modern classroom. He continues:

Two generations of Americans exposed largely to the influence of functional grammar have seemingly broken the back

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<sup>26</sup>J. Harold Smith, "A Plan for Presenting Grammar," English Journal, XLVII (October, 1959), 404.

<sup>27</sup>New York State Education Department, Syllabus in English for Secondary Schools, Grades 7-12 (1935), p. 205.

of the tradition that for so many years insisted upon formal grammar as indispensable to sound education.<sup>28</sup>

Rivlin affirms this trend of "grammar for composition" by pointing out that most of the public reports suggest that functional grammar, especially when taught on an individual basis after a diagnostic testing program, ordinarily leads to a marked improvement in the pupil's skill in using the mechanics of English composition.<sup>29</sup>

Angell Mathewson, in setting up guidelines for the teaching of English in high school and college, also emphasizes the importance of grammar for composition:

The grammar must be taught. The pupils must know the requirements for standard English if they are to criticize their own writing, but the practice in the actual writing is of primary importance--not the grammar.<sup>30</sup>

The Composition Laboratory. The idea of a writing laboratory is not new with this experiment, and its value has been affirmed by others. In 1943, William H. Johnson, superintendent of schools in Chicago reported on a laboratory program set up in the English classroom. Classrooms for English, as well as for science, were being designed to allow

<sup>28</sup>Richard Corbin, "Grammar and Usage: Progress but not Millenium," English Journal, XLIX (November, 1960), 552.

<sup>29</sup>Rivlin, op. cit., p. 593.

<sup>30</sup>Angell Mathewson, "English Teaching in School and Colleges" Clearing House, XXXV (October, 1960), 88.

movement and activity, small group work rather than drill, with new equipment provided for the projects. The approval of teachers and students was given to the writing situation, as the atmosphere became more relaxed and the students were given more individual help. Functional grammar was used extensively with composition projects.<sup>31</sup>

Arno Jewett, in reporting on the progress of the NEA English Composition Project centers located in the United States, reveals the use of a two-hour composition laboratory, devoted to the construction of a rough draft and final revision of a theme. An improvement in student writing was noted, and approval of those concerned was given to the project. Students felt that writing became easier and that they learned how to proofread for mechanical errors.<sup>32</sup>

Ruth Strickland, past President of the National Council of Teachers of English, reported on the Conference on Basic Issues in the Teaching of English, which affirmed that grammar should be taught only in relation to composition. The conference also indicated that more practice in writing was mandatory for the development of communication skills. They also advocated that student's writing be carefully studied for

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<sup>31</sup> William H. Johnson, "The High School English Laboratory," American School Board Journal, CIV (January, 1943), 31-33.

<sup>32</sup> Arno Jewett, "Eclectic, Experimental Programs in Composition," Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, XLVIII (February, 1964), 26.

mechanics as well as for clear handling of content and should be composed with the guidance of the teacher in the classroom.<sup>33</sup>

In a survey reporting the teaching of grammar of college composition courses, most instructors reported that grammar was taught according to the needs of students as demonstrated by errors in their themes. The themes were constructed mostly in a laboratory situation with the aid of the teacher.<sup>34</sup>

A recent English laboratory situation was observed by Grayce Foley Salerno, who reports that it was an elective workshop in the fundamentals of reading, writing, and speaking. Emphasis was given to correct usage in preparing short compositions and to paragraph development and precise writing. Functional grammar was taught as the need was evidenced in student writing. Teachers in charge of the laboratory felt that students learned to correct their own errors through pupil-teacher conferences on themes. Exercises in writing short paragraphs were found to be more effective than the "less meaningful and less subjective" drill involving word lists and grammar drill.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Ruth Strickland, "Some Basic Issues in the Teaching of English," Phi Delta Kappan, XLI (May, 1960), 334-335.

<sup>34</sup>Herman A. Estrin, "Grammar and Usage in a Composition-Communication Course," College English, XXIII (October, 1961), 43-44.

<sup>35</sup>Grayce Foley Salerno, "An English Laboratory in Action," English Journal, LII (January, 1963), 37-41.

One English teacher affirms the effectiveness of the opaque projector in a composition laboratory. This device aided her in returning themes promptly, and the ideas and organization of the themes improved. Common errors disappeared. She continues:

The learning process was transferred from an individual activity carried on between teacher and student to a group activity, with a common experience, pooling of ideas, and opportunity for the entire class to benefit.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Mary Margaret Robinson, "Using the Opaque Projector in Teaching Composition," English Journal, XXXV (October, 1946), 442-445.



## CHAPTER III

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

For purposes of comparison and conclusion, the students in the experimental group were paired with students in the control group on the basis of test scores of the Henmon-Nelson Intelligence Test, the language grammar section of the Distributive Aptitude Tests, the English usage and word usage sections of the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, and the verbal score of the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test, all of which were administered during the previous year (1962-63). Wherever possible, sex, socio-economic, and achievement factors were taken into consideration in pairing. Twenty pairs of students were finally selected for the purposes of the experiment, although all students in the classes participated in the instruction of both approaches.

The gain or achievement in vocabulary is noted in Table I. Only one student had a negative gain in this area as measured by the pretest and retest. The highest gain, plus nine points, was made by a student in the experimental or functional grammar section. Ten students out of twenty in the functional group made a lesser gain than did the students with whom they were paired in the formal group. However, the difference in gain was not appreciable on the part of the formal grammar group.

TABLE I

## SCORES AND GAINS IN VOCABULARY

Experimental Group				Control Group			
Student				Student			
No.	Pretest	Retest	Gain	No.	Pretest	Retest	Gain
1	13	15	+2	1	13	15	+2
2	6	13	+7	2	9	14	+5
3	8	13	+5	3	9	14	+5
4	7	13	+6	4	8	13	+5
5	4	13	+9	5	9	13	+4
6	8	11	+3	6	7	13	+6
7	8	14	+6	7	7	11	+4
8	9	14	+5	8	7	11	+4
9	2	9	+7	9	10	14	+4
10	10	14	+4	10	6	13	+7
11	6	9	+3	11	6	13	+7
12	3	9	+6	12	7	13	+6
13	7	10	+3	13	9	13	+4
14	4	6	+2	14	3	8	+5
15	13	11	-2	15	5	9	+4
16	11	12	+1	16	8	10	+2
17	4	10	+6	17	9	12	+3
18	8	12	+4	18	5	13	+8
19	4	7	+3	19	6	12	+6
20	6	8	+2	20	5	8	+3

Table II indicates the growth in achievement in the knowledge of business terms. Some words having to do with business and economics had been included in the vocabulary lists and had been used by students in the functional grammar group in themes. Again there is only one instance of a negative gain, and the student having this gain is the same student who had a negative gain in the vocabulary section. The greatest point gains were achieved by students in the control group, using word lists. However, thirteen students in the formal grammar group made lesser gains than did those students with whom they were paired in the experimental group. The highest gain, plus seven points, was achieved by a student in the formal grammar group.

Knowledge of the use of references is indicated by Table III. There were no students making a negative gain in this area, and the lowest of the positive gains was plus two points. The highest gain was made by student number 5 in the experimental group, who had an achievement of plus eight points. Only seven of the students in the experimental group made a lower score than the student with whom they were paired, and the difference in scores of these pairs was usually only two to three points. Nine students in the control group had a gain of less than five points, while only 4 of the students in the experimental group had a gain of less than five points.

TABLE II  
SCORES AND GAINS IN BUSINESS TERMS

Experimental Group				Control Group			
Student No.	Pretest	Retest	Gain	Student No.	Pretest	Retest	Gain
1	7	9	+2	1	6	10	+4
2	7	9	+2	2	9	10	+1
3	10	12	+2	3	10	10	+0
4	11	12	+1	4	6	9	+3
5	7	9	+2	5	6	11	+5
6	4	6	+2	6	11	12	+1
7	11	12	+1	7	9	11	+2
8	9	11	+2	8	3	10	+7
9	7	9	+2	9	8	10	+2
10	7	9	+2	10	8	9	+1
11	7	9	+2	11	10	12	+2
12	6	7	+1	12	9	10	+1
13	6	8	+2	13	10	12	+2
14	3	9	+6	14	5	10	+5
15	11	10	-1	15	6	8	+2
16	9	12	+3	16	8	11	+3
17	8	11	+3	17	6	9	+3
18	6	9	+3	18	9	10	+3
19	9	10	+1	19	8	11	+3
20	7	11	+4	20	8	11	+3

TABLE III  
SCORES AND GAINS IN USE OF REFERENCES

Experimental Group				Control Group			
Student No.	Pretest	Retest	Gain	Student No.	Pretest	Retest	Gain
1	6	11	+5	1	10	12	+2
2	7	12	+5	2	8	12	+4
3	10	12	+2	3	6	11	+5
4	6	12	+6	4	9	12	+3
5	3	11	+8	5	6	11	+5
6	6	10	+4	6	7	12	+5
7	12	12	+5	7	6	11	+5
8	6	11	+5	8	4	10	+6
9	3	10	+7	9	8	12	+2
10	4	11	+7	10	5	11	+6
11	4	10	+6	11	9	12	+3
12	1	8	+7	12	6	12	+6
13	3	9	+6	13	7	11	+4
14	2	8	+6	14	2	9	+7
15	7	11	+4	15	4	9	+5
16	6	11	+5	16	6	10	+4
17	3	10	+7	17	8	11	+3
18	5	11	+6	18	8	12	+4
19	3	7	+4	19	4	10	+6
20	4	9	+5	20	2	8	+6

In Table IV is seen the resulting achievements made in language usage by the students in both groups. No negative gains are recorded in this area, and the lowest gain is plus four points, made by a student who achieved a score of fifty out of sixty on the first test and fifty-four out of sixty on the second. The student making the highest gain in language usage as measured by this test, plus nineteen points, was number nineteen on the list, indicating low scores on the other tests by which the students were paired. Fourteen out of twenty students in the experimental group had higher gains than did the students in the control group with whom they were compared. Fourteen students in the control group had a gain of less than ten points, while only 7 in the experimental group had a gain of less than ten points.

Table V lists the results of the tests given in capitalization and punctuation. The highest gain was made by student number one in the experimental group, who had a pretest score of twenty-three out of sixty and a retest score of fifty-one out of sixty, making a total gain of twenty-eight points. The lowest gain was plus three points, made by student number eleven in the control section, who had a pretest score of forty-seven out of sixty and a retest score of fifty out of sixty. Only two of the students in the functional grammar (experimental) group had a gain of less than ten points, while ten students in the formal group (control) had gains under ten points.

TABLE IV  
SCORES AND GAINS IN LANGUAGE USAGE

Experimental Group				Control Group			
Student No.	Pretest	Retest	Gain	Student No.	Pretest	Retest	Gain
1	50	54	+4	1	50	56	+6
2	41	53	+12	2	48	56	+8
3	46	58	+12	3	46	53	+7
4	41	55	+14	4	38	50	+12
5	48	54	+6	5	41	52	+11
6	27	39	+12	6	47	56	+9
7	43	56	+13	7	36	50	+14
8	49	57	+8	8	39	47	+8
9	39	45	+6	9	41	52	+11
10	39	51	+12	10	48	53	+5
11	34	51	+17	11	50	56	+6
12	31	46	+15	12	38	50	+12
13	31	46	+15	13	40	48	+8
14	31	39	+8	14	28	46	+18
15	41	50	+9	15	28	35	+7
16	46	54	+8	16	27	36	+9
17	31	46	+15	17	46	52	+6
18	31	46	+15	18	45	51	+6
19	31	50	+19	19	38	46	+8
20	41	49	+8	20	35	41	+6

TABLE V  
CAPITALIZATION AND PUNCTUATION

Experimental Group				Control Group			
Student No.	Pretest	Retest	Gain	Student No.	Pretest	Retest	Gain
1	23	51	+28	1	39	48	+9
2	36	55	+19	2	39	51	+12
3	38	57	+19	3	42	56	+14
4	46	56	+10	4	46	53	+7
5	37	51	+14	5	37	50	+13
6	39	51	+12	6	50	55	+5
7	50	58	+8	7	35	46	+11
8	43	54	+11	8	35	39	+4
9	31	49	+18	9	46	54	+8
10	38	53	+15	10	41	55	+14
11	31	54	+23	11	47	50	+3
12	26	40	+14	12	36	53	+17
13	26	42	+16	13	46	50	+4
14	26	43	+17	14	39	50	+11
15	43	50	+7	15	36	41	+5
16	39	58	+19	16	31	40	+9
17	38	54	+16	17	38	50	+12
18	40	45	+5	18	38	52	+14
19	34	46	+12	19	42	51	+9
20	36	46	+10	20	31	45	+14



The scores made on spelling are found in Table VI. All students made a positive gain in this area, with a plus twenty-one points being the highest gain. The lowest gain was plus two points, made by student number thirteen in the control group. Nine students in the experimental group made lower gains than did their partners in the control group. The greatest difference in gain of any of the pairs is the gains of pair number thirteen. Student number thirteen in the experimental group (functional grammar) made a gain of seventeen points, while his partner in the control group (formal grammar) had only a gain of two points. About half the students in each group had a gain in spelling achievement greater than ten points.

Table VII consists of a summary of the median and mean gains made by the students in the control (formal grammar) and experimental (functional grammar) groups. In vocabulary, the control groups had higher median and mean gains than did the experimental group, with the control group having a median gain of five points, the experimental group, a median gain of four points, and the control group having a mean gain of four and six-tenths points, the experimental group, four and one tenth points. The control group also had higher gains in business terms. The experimental group had higher gains on every other area measured, with a four point difference in median gain in language usage, a one point

TABLE VI  
SCORES AND GAINS IN SPELLING

Experimental Group				Control Group			
Student No.	Pretest	Retest	Gain	Student No.	Pretest	Retest	Gain
1	29	50	+21	1	46	55	+9
2	41	56	+15	2	42	54	+14
3	50	54	+4	3	47	57	+10
4	51	58	+7	4	38	49	+11
5	20	39	+19	5	45	53	+8
6	38	54	+16	6	50	57	+7
7	47	54	+7	7	46	52	+6
8	54	57	+3	8	41	50	+9
9	28	46	+18	9	45	54	+9
10	42	49	+7	10	44	54	+10
11	28	50	+22	11	39	54	+15
12	30	43	+13	12	34	49	+15
13	23	40	+17	13	46	48	+2
14	36	48	+12	14	36	44	+8
15	37	48	+11	15	27	47	+20
16	48	54	+6	16	33	45	+12
17	36	49	+13	17	47	53	+6
18	38	42	+4	18	41	54	+13
19	30	48	+18	19	35	48	+13
20	38	42	+4	20	30	38	+8

TABLE VII

## SUMMARY OF MEDIAN AND MEAN GAINS BY BOTH GROUPS

Test No.	Control		Experimental	
	Med. Gain	Mean Gain	Med. Gain	Mean Gain
Vocabulary	+3	4.1	+5	4.6
Business Terms	+2	2.2	+3	2.6
Use of References	+6	5.5	+5	4.55
Language	+12	11.4	+8	8.85
Capitalization and Punctuation	+15	14.1	+11	9.65
Spelling	+13	11.9	+10	9.25

median gain in use of references, a four point median gain in capitalization and punctuation, and a three point median gain in spelling.

Summary. The gains as indicated by pretest and retest for both the experimental and control groups have been significant. Only two negative gains were made in any of the areas tested, and very few low gains were found. Usually less than half of the students in the experimental groups made lesser gains than those students with whom they

were paired. The highest gains in each test were distributed equally between the control and experimental groups.

Higher gains were made in the areas of language usage, capitalization and punctuation, and spelling. The control group using the formal grammar approach made higher gains than the functional grammar group in the areas of vocabulary and business terms, but the functional grammar group had significantly higher scores in all other areas.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Procedure. The study has been conducted in order to determine the effectiveness of two methods of teaching grammar. One group of students was taught grammar from a functional approach and was paired with students in another group who were taught grammar from a formal approach. Tests were administered at the beginning and the end of the semester to measure the achievement in knowledge of grammar of both the functional and formal grammar groups.

Findings. The comparison of the gains made by students in the formal and functional groups as discussed in Chapter III reveals that the control group using formal grammar made higher scores in the areas of vocabulary and business terms, while the experimental group using functional grammar made higher gains in the areas of use of references, language usage, capitalization and punctuation, and spelling.

Conclusions. From the evidence found in the test scores and gains, it may be concluded that higher gains are made in vocabulary when word lists are the chief means of study and when application of the use of such words is frequent. A more haphazard method of vocabulary study, such as that used by the functional grammar group is effective also, but less effective than word lists according to the results of

the tests. The same conclusion could be drawn about the study of business terms, a specialized form of word study.

As for the other areas related to the teaching of grammar, language usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, it may be concluded that a functional approach is more effective than a formal approach. Students will retain more knowledge of such principles when they have seen errors and examples in their own writing, than when they merely drill on recognition of need for the use of capitalization and spelling.

It was interesting to note, while the teaching of both groups was being done, that the students in the experimental group using functional grammar were much more interested in the work they were doing and felt that they were profiting, while the students in the formal group often seemed bored with remembering terminology and doing prepared exercises. Several students in the functional grammar group remarked that grammar finally "made sense" to them, since they saw reasons for certain kinds of grammatical knowledge which helped them in their writing. Some of the sentence structures made by the students provided interesting study of errors in structure which could occur as well as errors in usage. Both classes had been told a great deal about college composition courses and the difficulty which former graduates of Junius H. Rose High School had in such classes. The functional grammar group felt that the

experience in writing prepared them better than drill in grammatical principles without application. After the results of the study had been gathered, a similar composition laboratory was given to the formal grammar group, most of these students feeling that the experience of learning from their own productions and mistakes was more beneficial than the unit they had in formal grammar study.

Recommendations. The same study could be done with a larger number of pairs and thus be compared in results to the findings of this experiment. If the study had a larger scope, perhaps more teachers would choose to observe the validity and effectiveness of the method which was statistically shown to be more effective.

It would be interesting to note the results of a comparative study of formal and functional grammar made in a different geographic location. Junius H. Rose High School had had the reputation of sending a high percentage of its graduates to higher education, and a comparison with a school in a different curriculum specialty would prove interesting. Different socio-economic conditions in the community might provide different results in effectiveness of either method.

It is recommended that for the teaching of high school seniors in a college preparatory curriculum, functional grammar should be taught with much practice in composition, in order to afford greater effectiveness in written and spoken communication.

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